

LX. *An Account of Four undescribed Fishes of Aleppo ; in a Letter to Mr. Peter Collinson, F.R.S. by Alexander Ruffel, M.D.*

S I R,

Read Jan. 15,
1755.

HAVING at Aleppo met with a few fishes, which appeared to me singular, I was induced to bring with me drawings and descriptions of them ; which I have since shewn to several curious gentlemen, abroad as well as in *England*, to all of whom I found they were likewise unknown.

Fig. 1 and 4 (TAB. XII.) seem to be quite new genera ; and 2 and 3, (*TAB. XIII.*) tho' they belong to the same genus with the *Mystus*, described by *Gronovius* in his *Mus. Ichthyologic*, p. 34. No. 83, and p. 35, No. 84 ; yet are species of that fish, that I cannot find have hitherto been described. I therefore imagined, that the laying them before the Royal Society would not be disagreeable ; and as you were so kind as to offer me your assistance on this occasion, I have sent you the drawings and descriptions inclosed. I am,

S I R,

Lime-street, 9 Dec.
1755.

Your most obedient

humble servant,

Alex. Ruffel.

VOL. 49.

M m m

THE

THE fish *Fig. 1*, in its shape a good deal resembles the *Silurus Rondeletii*; like it too having no scales. Its length (from the nose to the tip of the tail) 20 inches; weight 20 ounces; but they are of different sizes. The head and back are of a black colour. The lateral line runs quite from the head to the tail, on the middle of the side; below which, to the belly, the colour gradually changes into a dark purple: of the same colour is the under part of the head. The head is flat, and in length near five inches. The body roundish, till within a few inches of the tail, where it grows flat. The mouth is not so large in proportion as that of the *Silurus*; it has no tongue, and the structure of the mouth and palate agree exactly with the description of that fish. From the edge of the nostril on each side arises a small *cirrus*; and from the angles of the mouth two others, that are stronger, and twice as long. On the lower lip are four more, the two external being the longest. The eyes are situated near the corner of the mouth, close upon the inferior edge of the upper jaw. The *branchiæ* are four on each side, and all of them have a double row of sharp points, like the teeth of a comb. It has two fins, situated near to the *branchiæ*, consisting of seven *radii*, to the interior part of which is joined a pretty strong prickly bone: about an inch above the *anus* are two smaller fins. A long fin extends from a little way under the *anus* to the tail, as another of the same kind does from the neck all along the back: neither of these fins join with the tail, which is round at the tip, and composed of about twenty-two feathers.

This

This fish is found in the river Orontes, and I believe also in some stagnant waters near to it. The markets of Aleppo are plentifully supplied with it, from the month of November till the beginning of March. The flesh is red like beef, and of a rank taste ; and tho', for want of better, eat much by the people, yet is esteemed unwholesome. The name it usually goes by is *Semack al Afwad*, which signifies the Black Fish. Its proper name however, among the natives, is *Siloor*.

The fish *Fig. 2*, is about four inches long. The head is large and flat, the body oblong and compressed. Its colour is mostly of a dark silver. The eyes are large and protuberant. From the lower jaw arise four *cirri* ; the longer measure one inch, the shorter two thirds of an inch. From the upper jaw arise two longer, each measuring two inches and a half, of a firmer texture than either those of the lower jaw, or two other small ones placed just by the nostrils. Between the two long *cirri* are two small *tubuli*. The whole of the *cirri* are of a white colour, excepting the two longest, which are of a darkish colour, like the upper part of the head. The fins are eight in number. Two by the gills, each furnished with a strong saw-like bone. Two small ones near the *anus*. One of eight *radii*, situated half-way between the *anus* and the tail. One consisting of seven *radii* on the back. Another fin, of a membranous and fleshy texture, arises from the middle of the back, and is continued all along to the tail. The tail is forked.

This fish is found in the river Coic at Aleppo, where the fish in general are extremely small, in

proportion to those of the same kinds found in other rivers, probably owing to the assiduity of the fishermen. It is called by the natives, *Zakzuk*.

Fig. 3. represents a fish, which in its general form somewhat resembles the above. It is in length three inches. The head is rather flatter; the mouth has a more inferior situation, and is in proportion larger than that of the former fish; the eyes much smaller. The *cirri*, situated as in the other, are eight in number, but much shorter those that rise from the upper jaw (being the longest) measuring only one inch; they are also flatter at their origin.

They both agree in the number of their fins; neither has the saw-like bone in the fin of the back, but only in those near the gills. The fleshy fin of the back is much smaller than in the *Zakzuk*, and rises at a much greater distance from the back fin. The colour is a pale silver marbled with grey; particularly the lower part of the fins and tail. The two larger *cirri* likewise marbled, the others white.

These two fishes (*Fig. 2, 3.*) have no scales, and the palate and other structure of the inside of the mouth is like that of the *Silurus*.

This last described fish is also from the river Coic.

The fish *Fig. 4.* has upon a slight view so much the appearance of an eel, and, except its not being so fat, eats so like that fish, that tho' it is much oftener brought to the tables of the Europeans at Aleppo than any other fish found in the river Coic, it has never been suspected of being any-ways different from the common eel; and yet, upon examination, it will be found of quite another genus.

The

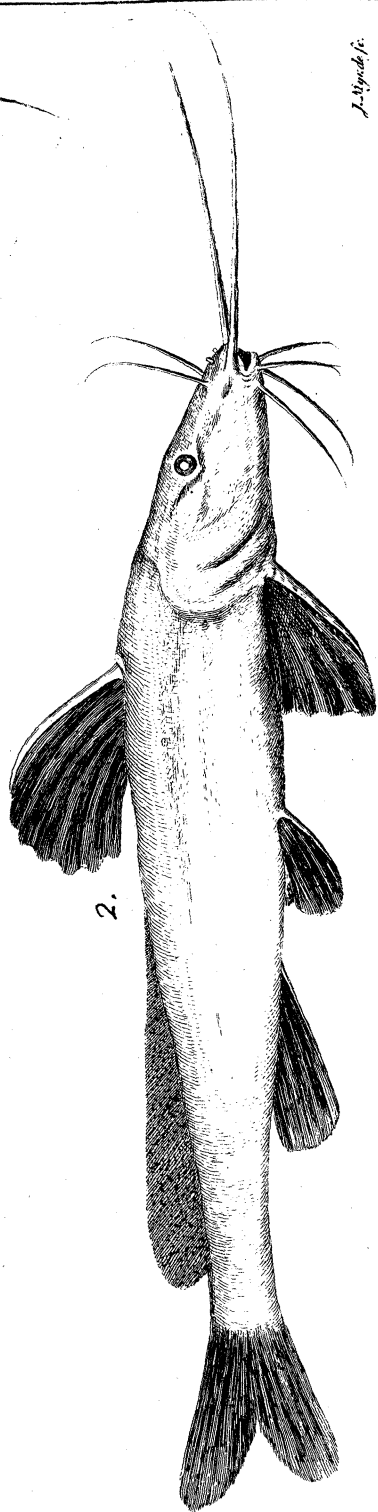
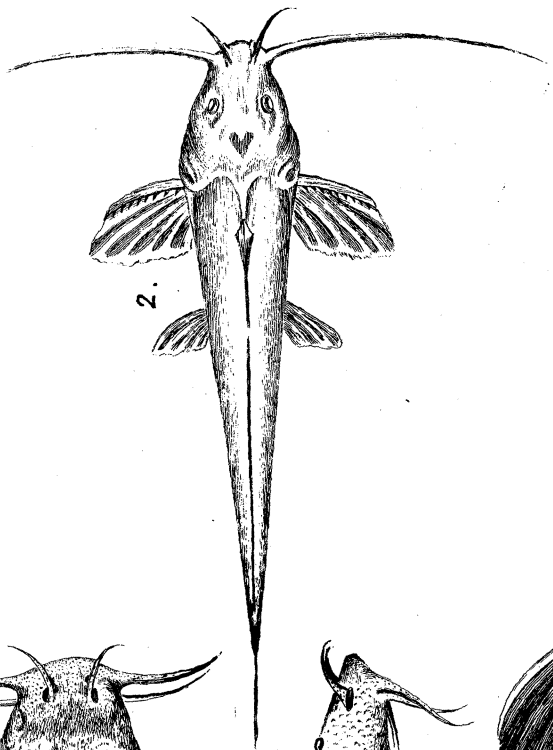
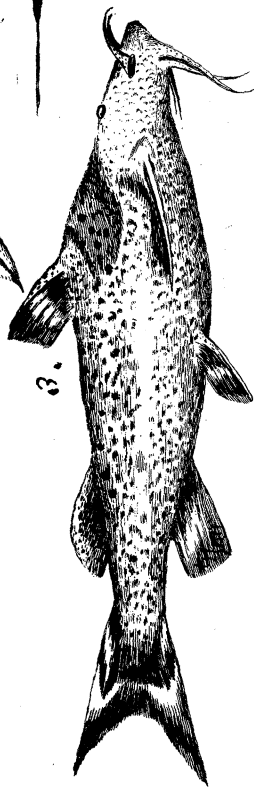
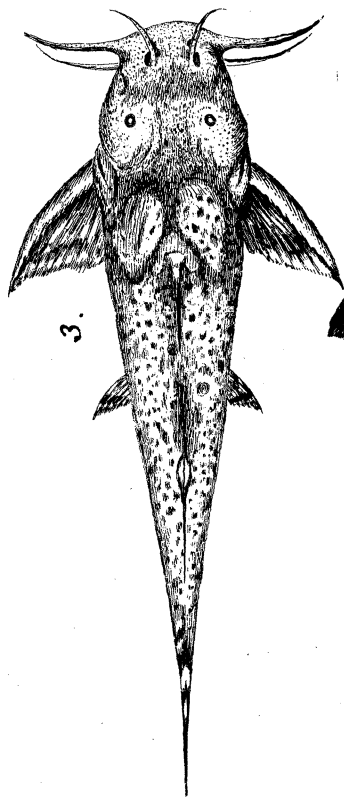
The head is long and small. The extremity of the upper jaw runs out to a narrow point like the bill of a bird ; on each side of which, a little distant from the extreme point, are two *tubuli*, or processes. As in the common eel, there are two fins at the gills. From the occiput all along the ridge of the back, small prickles are placed at little distances, resembling the teeth of a saw ; these terminate at the origin of a membranous fin, rising about four inches from the tail, and is continued (as in the eel) along the lower part of the belly to the anus, at which place are also found two or three prickles. The colour of the head and back is blackish, variegated with dark-yellow spots. The lower belly white, changing gradually into a yellowish cast. The fin of the lower belly near to the anus is yellow, the other half spotted with black. The length of the fish described was eleven inches.

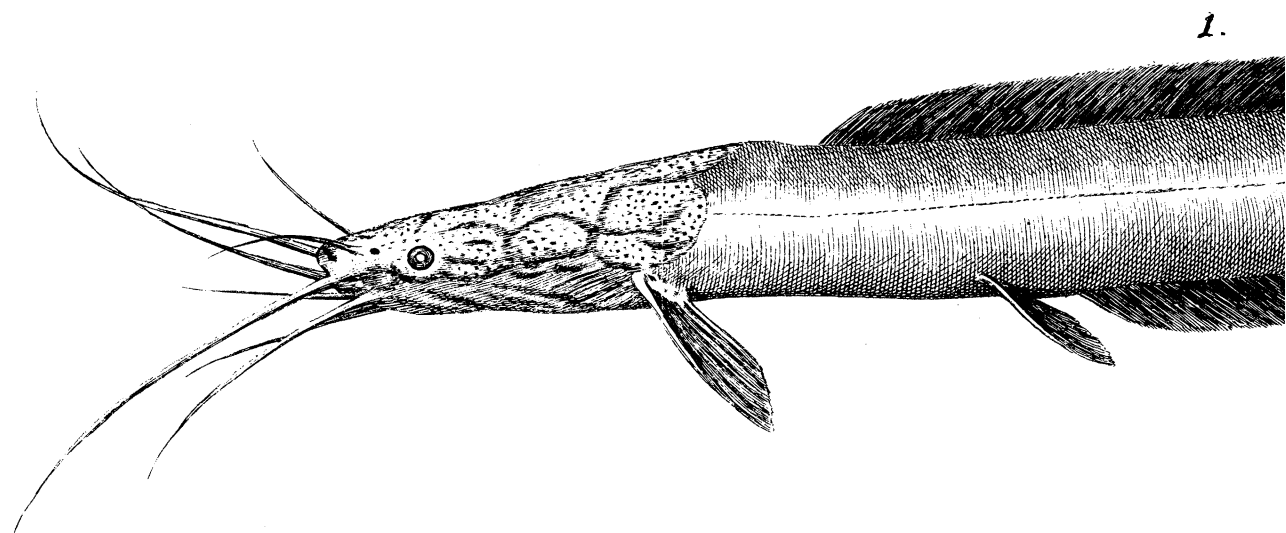
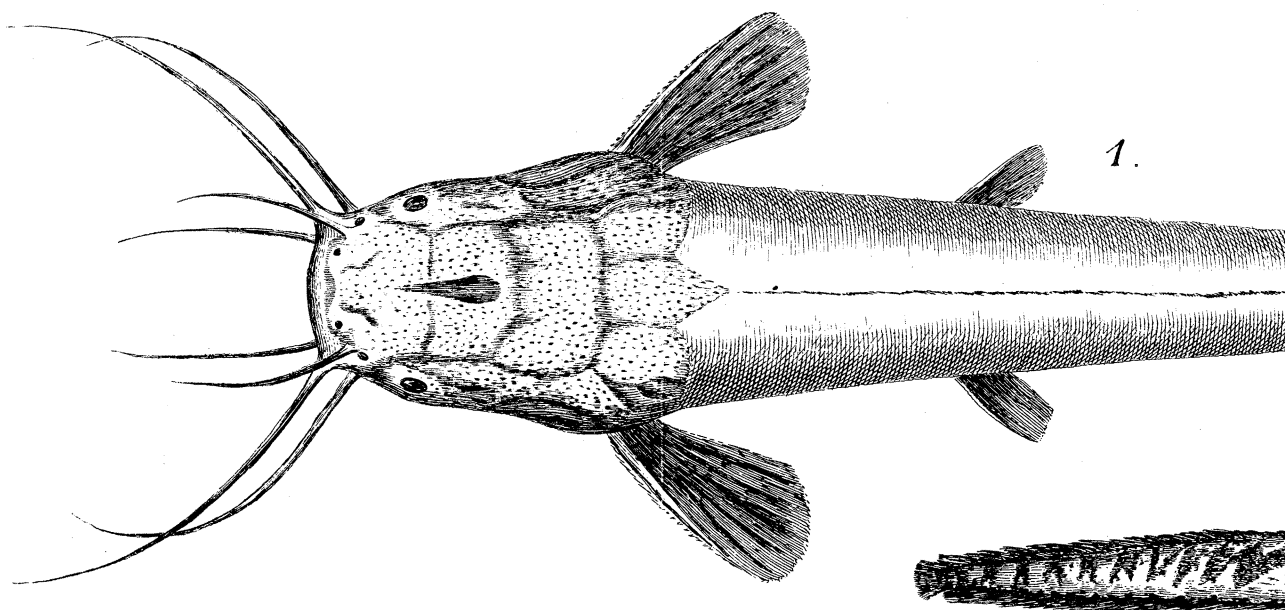
LXI. *An Account of a curious, fleshy, coral-like Substance ; in a Letter to Mr. Peter Collinson, F. R. S. from Dr. John Albert Schloffer, M. D. F. R. S. with some Observations on it communicated to Mr. Collinson by Mr. John Ellis, F. R. S.*

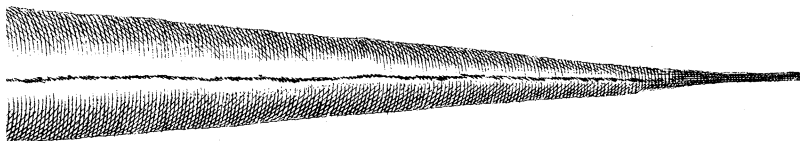
Dear Sir,

Read Jan. 22,
1756.

I Hir'd some fishermen to drudge for me in this harbour, in order to examine the small English coral, or *corallium nostras* of Ray's *Synopsis*, recent in the microscope. The first







4.



1.

